Blueprint for Persistence 2020

A Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth collective one-year action plan to catalyze changes that will lead to an increase in student completion and persistence at Hennepin Technical College and North Hennepin Community College.

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What if we increased college persistence rates so that all students could succeed?

We learned through the Stop Drop Enroll! research study that 40% of students attending North Hennepin Community College (NHCC) and Hennepin Technical College (HTC) do not persist to their 2nd year resulting in nearly 6.8 Million in lost tuition revenue, cuts in services and courses, and economic opportunity lost for the Northwest region. The study revealed both individual, institutional and systemic (regional or community) reasons students do not persist.

Our research showed:

- The three strongest predictors of dropping out include 1) a “hold” on a student’s record, 2) an unsuccessful course (attaining less than a “C” grade) and 3) withdrawing from any course
- Students who identify as black or African-American or two or more races were twice as likely to experience these outcomes
- Students who had dropped out identified stress, not enough guidance to navigate college, difficulty scheduling classes in evenings and weekends, and financial challenges related to housing, tuition and transportation as key determinants of dropout
- Students who received mentoring, counseling and peer support were 12% more likely to persist than their peers
- Students who had the following assets were more likely to persist 1) Help seeking, 2) Motivation and 3) Time management
- There are very different perceptions between faculty and students regarding their readiness for college: 68% of students thought they were ready, whereas 17% of faculty thought students were ready
- College faculty and staff identified that lack of student preparation for college, uncoordinated services, lack of awareness of existing resources and cultural disconnection as key drivers of students dropping out

Key take away: There are many individual and institutional barriers to persistence. Many of which we can address if we work together, and in different ways.
Best Practices & National Models

Several national models, frameworks, and research studies were used as examples of best practice.

The No Excuses Poverty Initiative at Amarillo College (TX) began with learning who their students were, what were their educational dreams, and what was the reality of their educational attainment and completion. Realizing that every single one of student’s top barriers to success was based in poverty and not academics, leaders at the college took action, creating an on-campus social services office called the Advocacy and Resource Center (ARC), instituting an emergency fund to cover student economic crises, and establishing a network of organizations, businesses, and individuals committed to supporting students, and supplementing those actions with case management, academic support, curriculum development, and college-wide hiring and evaluation practices. Establishing a comprehensive “culture of caring” to address student poverty barriers has resulted in a 185% growth in degree/transfer rates in the past 6 years.

The Association of American College & Universities’ (AACU) Guided Pathways is an integrated framework that supports institutional transformation with student success at the center based upon a structured experience. It builds on institutional capacity to define clear and coherent pathways for degree completion and to ensure learning while on the pathways, leading to completion of a post-secondary degree or credential, and to achieve equity in those outcomes. The guided pathways framework has four main practice areas:

- **Clarify the paths.** Map all programs to transfer and career. Include features that clarify paths, such as detailed outcomes, course sequences, and progress milestones.
- **Help students get on a path.** Require supports that help students get the best start, including first-year experiences and integrated academic support.
- **Help students stay on their path.** Keep students on track with supports such as intrusive advising and systems for tracking progress.
- **Ensure students are learning.** Use program-level outcomes, culturally responsive teaching practices, and high-quality assessment to promote student learning.

The paper Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Community College Student Success (Goldrick-Rab, 2010) critically examines academic and policy research in search of explanations of why large proportions of students who enter community college do not persist for longer than a semester. The author offers a list of policies and practices representing the most promising areas for reform.

- **Career pathways.** Connected education and training programs and support services that enable students to secure employment in an industry with opportunities for advancement.
- **Learning communities.** Model in which instruction is organized thematically and cohorts of student take multiple classes together.
- **Student life skills course.** Orientation courses help students with different learning styles and introduce study skills, time management, and effective college habits.
- **Smaller counselor-student ratios.** Reducing counselor caseloads produces positive impacts.
- **Emergency financial aid.** Funds help students quickly meet financial obligations.
Collective Actions to Increase Persistence

With results from the Stop Drop Enroll! IRB approved study and the results from engaging over 700 stakeholders, we gathered a small team of ‘Blueprint Architects’ from North Hennepin Community College (NHCC), Hennepin Technical College (HTC) and the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth (Alliance) to build a roadmap for increasing persistence that builds on existing assets, sparks innovation and leverages new partnerships. These architects included student senate leaders, Alliance staff and executive leadership from both colleges.

Through consensus building, the group identified six collective actions needed at an organizational and systems level to increase persistence.

These actions are our blueprint goals:

1. Mobilize Students, Administrators, and Faculty to Design, Build, and Implement Student-Centered Scheduling

Many students work to pay for college and to persist they need convenient access to the courses they need to complete their goals. Exploring scheduling options such as block, online, evening and weekend courses would increase access and allow students to maintain a credit load that enables them to access critical financial aid resources.

- Projects and Initiatives Underway
  - Academic program & Academic division “re-clusters” (NHCC)
  - Default Schedule Pilot (NHCC)
  - Academic Affairs survey to students about derived schedules and will conduct pilot (HTC)

- Opportunities to consider for further action
  - Analyzing existing schedules to see if students can finish degree with existing schedule options; part time, on weekends only, evenings only, etc.
  - Analyze existing schedules to see if they allow for PSEO access
  - Moving required classes so that they are not offered at the same time
  - Flexible schedules
Create a Culture of Teaching and Learning That Is Culturally Responsive

Faculty and staff need opportunities to build an asset-based learning community and acquire teaching practices that lead to a safe and supportive learning environment; that responds to and engages students from the diverse cultural backgrounds represented in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park.

- **Projects and Initiatives Underway**
  - New Vice President of Academic Affairs will be designing a new faculty orientation, and include culturally responsive pedagogy (HTC)
  - All college leaders are doing the IDI-intercultural development training (HTC)
  - All faculty duty days this year have a 1-hour training on culture, privilege, power, etc. There are eight professional development days per year for trainings (HTC)
  - All staff and faculty Professional Development/Duty Day focused on Habits, Attitudes, Beliefs and Expectations (HABE) factor training (NHCC)
  - The newly formed Center for Teaching and Learning will strongly advance this goal (NHCC)
  - New staff, Assistant Vice President of Equity and Inclusion (NHCC)
  - Equity by Design 2023 (NHCC) and Minnesota State “Equity 2030” (HTC, NHCC)
  - Quality Assessments of Teachers (success dashboard, NHCC)

- **Opportunities to consider for further action**
  - Support and training for leadership on intentional organizational culture change
  - Resource sharing between K-12 leadership and College leaders; many of whom are actively engaged in creating a culture of teaching and learning that is culturally responsive (Alliance)
  - Opportunity for students to provide feedback besides student survey

Develop and Leverage Partnerships to Increase Access to Opportunities for Students to Meet Their Needs and Goals

Convenient access to health care, mental health supports, academic counseling, childcare, transportation, financial coaching, food, and connections between high schools and colleges are key supports that can increase persistence. Also, as we learned in our presentations to over 500 staff and faculty, that many were unaware of existing resources on their campus.

Moving forward there are three main tactics to realize this goal: 1) Staff and faculty need to be aware of and actively connect their students to these supports, 2) New partnerships and services not previously offered on college campus are needed to support the needs of students and 3) Tracking data on the impact of these resources.

- **Projects and Initiatives Underway**
  - Fairview Partnership with On-Campus Clinics (Fairview, NHCC)
  - Redesign of our community connections, social worker, and counseling services (NHCC)
City of Brooklyn Park partnership with Community Development to explore building affordable housing for students and/or keeping existing housing affordable (City of Brooklyn Park, NHCC & HTC)

Further engage with Hennepin County public health, social services to create supports for students utilizing/engaged by county (e.g. foster care youth, county probation) (HTC)

Hennepin County public health food insecurity research – advancing the Hunger free campus legislation (HTC & Hennepin County Public Health)

Resource fairs on campus (Partners, NHCC & HTC)

Opportunities to consider for further action
- Leverage the Strategy Team to iteratively engage and support partnerships (Alliance)
- Developing a shared policy / legislative advocacy agenda e.g. Housing, transportation, mental health and counselors (Alliance)
- Creative approaches to transportation or child care

4 Consistent Advising, Tutoring, and Navigation Support for All Students

Students who received mentoring, counseling and peer support were nearly 12% more likely to persist than their peers. We know these supports work. Now, we need to build the state and local resources to do so.

Projects and Initiatives Underway
- Assigned advising (NHCC)
- Guided pathways – clusters of majors together with core classes, same advisors, common activities (in place at HTC, coming soon at NHCC)
- Learning Resource Center-tutoring (HTC, NHCC)
- Mental health counseling personnel and resources (NHCC)
- Enrollment consultant redesign of advising to be case load specific by major, which will increase consistent advising / improved navigation (HTC)
- Online tutoring is available for students through tutor.com for increased access to academic supports when and where students need it (NHCC)
- Learning Resource Center redesign to be more seamless and accessible for students to use the Match Resource Center, Writing Center, Peer Tutoring and Access Services; to ensure consistent and high-quality experience in all areas.
- Integrated services/1 stop (HTC, NHCC)

Opportunities to consider for further action
- Engage the K-12 partners to design student preparation for college (Alliance)
- Need to hire more advisors (policy agenda and advocacy)
- Develop ways for students to build assets such as help-seeking, motivation and time-management with both College and k-12 partners. (Alliance)
Bring Students, Staff, and Faculty Together to Continually Identify Blocks and Build Process Solutions Together

To create solutions that solve for the institutional challenges we need to shift how we identify and address problems and focus our attention on building assets. Approaches such as customer-centered design, process improvement practices, and inclusive planning, will help mobilize student, staff and faculty innovations. College partners need to strengthen existing assets and look to leverage external partners to support this work.

- Projects and Initiatives Underway
  - A “Persistence task force” is meeting to review the use of “holds” on student records, editing language, use, clarifying for students how they can remove the hold, and cleaning up data related to tracking (HTC)
  - Develop a communication plan to prevent holds for those predicted to get one (HTC)
  - Enrollment consultant (Swim Digital Group), is revising enrollment staffing, support and communication (HTC)
  - Every Student Affairs department creating one action step that directly addresses learning from Stop, Drop, Enroll and is measurable to implement this year (HTC)
  - Student Senate presenting at president’s advisory council (HTC, NHCC)
  - Student members on college committees and bi-weekly student senate and college leadership information sharing and feedback meetings (HTC, NHCC)
  - Student focus groups (NHCC) Integrated Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) Plan (HTC)
  - Student Affairs 2020 Work Plans: Leveraging data from SDE research to develop Key Performance Indicators (performance measurement goals) for Student Affairs (NHCC)
  - Lead MN should include faculty members in their programs
  - Vice President of student affairs: listening sessions with student senate (HTC)
  - Developmental Education (non-credit earning, but required) Redesign (HTC, NHCC)
  - Accessible student complaint/suggestion feedback platforms (HTC, NHCC)
- Opportunities to consider for further action
  - Training on process improvement and process redesign using student centered / customer centered design (Alliance)

Expand Intentional Communication, Engagement, and Involvement with Students

Navigating college is not easy. Today, students are required to use online technology to register, participate in courses and get coaching on financial matters. A big step forward in improving navigation can begin in partnering with students to develop a variety of ways to let students know about resources on campus and in the community, creating ‘near peer’ coaching, and re-designing web-based, electronic and text messaging systems to be concise and clear.

- Projects and Initiatives Underway
  - ‘What’s Happening’ flyers (HTC)
- Focus groups to determine co-curricular (relevant experiences that are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum) engagement for Black/African American Students
- Exploring and improving Peer Mentoring Models (NHCC, HTC)
- NHCC Mobile App and the Navigate App that includes direct student messaging, a community wall, student organization chat groups, campus resources, event calendars, and the ability to set up appointments with advisors on campus.
- Interactive Boards (NHCC)
- Real time retention dashboard to show withdrawals so staff and faculty can provide outreach and prevent students from dropping out (HTC)
- Designing a communication plan to showcase resources, services and provide key asset tips to students (HTC)

- Opportunities to consider for further action
  - Youth on Boards Initiative is emerging at the Alliance; the Alliance would coordinate student leadership opportunities in the college and to city, county and school district partners.
  - Collaboratively improve peer mentoring: Redesign peer mentoring (HTC), Create peer mentoring (NHCC), (Alliance)
  - Looking at alternative communications e.g ambassadors, other technology, personal invitations from faculty and staff.
  - Get HTC a mobile app that includes direct student messaging, a community wall, student organization chat groups, campus resources, event calendars, and the ability to set up appointments with advisors on campus.

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### Key Metrics of Success

**How will we know we are successful?**

Partners identified the following metrics of success. We realize that there both personal, institutional and systemic (regional and community) issues that impact student persistence. We know that we will need to measure both short and long-term results to determine if our efforts have having the impact we had hoped for.

**Short-Term**
- Increase of faculty and staff who are aware of, and utilize, supports for students
- Increase in students who say they 1) ask for help, 2) stay motivated and 3) effectively manage their time
- Decrease in students who are experiencing food insecurity

**Long-Term**
- Increased persistence; students continue to their 2nd year
✓ Increase in students, staff and faculty reporting that campus culture feels positive, strengths based and able to support students towards success
✓ Increase students who report feeling proud of being at NHCC/HTC and would recommend others to attend
✓ Increase of students who complete their degree
✓ Long-term regional outcome; Increase in social mobility-debt to income ratio, and transition to employment

Collective Accountability

How Will We Share Our Success and Report Results?

Together we will:

✓ Track results
  o We will gather student portraits of persistence – stories that reflect the change we are creating and share them with stakeholders
  o We will highlight leaders across our systems, who are champions for student persistence in our high schools, colleges, county, cities and community

✓ Use the Alliance governance structure to support this work.
  o Build shared oversight; by sharing results with the Alliance Strategy Team, Executive Team and Board of Director
  o In 2020, we will report quarterly to the Alliance Board of Directors, College Cabinets, student senate and leadership teams.

✓ Communicate progress with stakeholders
  o Including regular updates to college staff and Faculty– we will report on workshop days in August 2020, and during the February Student success day

✓ Generate the resources needed to move forward existing, and launch new efforts that align with our goals
Resource Estimates

The following are broad estimates for advancing work related to the blueprint. With approval from governing bodies at the Alliance and Colleges, staff will develop a more detailed timeline for implementation and further determine what resources already exist and what new resources will be needed. (Asterisk indicates that staffing at the colleges may already be funded/allocated)

1-year Budget Overview:
- Blueprint Coordination and Evaluation $80,000
- College Partner Blueprint Coordination $50,000*
- College Internal Coordination for Student Supports $70,000*
- Integrated Service Space $10,000-$80,000*
- Student Leadership $30,000
- Total estimate: $110,000 – $310,000

Budget Estimates
1. Blueprint for Persistence - Collective Impact Backbone support
   a. College partners align existing resources to advance shared goals (staff, committee’s, physical capital, fundraising approaches etc)
   b. Use the existing Alliance structure to implement projects at both colleges and in community, ensure student leadership and engagement, mobilize resources, measure impact and build sustainability plan
      i. Blueprint Coordination (Alliance) $50,000
      ii. Blueprint Evaluation (Alliance) $30,000
      iii. College partner coordination $50,000*

2. Internal Coordination of student supports at NHCC and HTC (financial aid, housing, food, text books, scheduling, job placement, mentoring, well-being)
   a. Project manager at the Colleges (.3) = $70,000 (if not already allocated)
   b. Students and staff map existing assets
   c. Build a student-centered communication approach
   d. Train student ambassadors, staff and faculty
e. Create branded materials

3. Integrated service space at NHCC and HTC
   a. Project manager to design the space (TBD, $10,000)
   b. Ongoing staff to operate the space (TBD - existing staff or new?)
   c. At each college, students and staff develop concept and processes to advance ‘help-seeking’ behavior in students
   d. Implement integrated service space; with the iterative process of assessing impact on student persistence, assessing student needs every 2 years, and ensuring quality of services provided

4. Mobilize Student leadership across City, County, Colleges and K-12
   a. Alliance Youth and Community Engagement Initiative Coordinator (.1) $30,000
   b. Redesign peer mentoring that could be scaled across the Minnesota State System ($20,000 to coordinate partners)
   c. Pilot the Youth on Boards leadership engagement approach; and provide TA on inclusionary practices ($10,000)

5. Leverage Community Support and Partnerships:
   a. Project manager (included in overall Coordination, estimate $10-20,000)
   b. Leveraging existing housing supports: A request for John Kinara housing stability coordinator to provide housing stability clinics information sessions at NHCC and HTC weekly. This would add staff capacity to the colleges and housing expertise. Housing stability coordinator could also provide an overview to faculty and staff and make them aware of the challenges and opportunities.
   c. Explore NEW housing options for students with the City of Brooklyn Park. Underway - A request to the City of Brooklyn Park to partner on implementing a unified persistence housing strategy that has multiple approaches to creating more, establishing new, retaining existing, coordinating different approaches for housing stability.
d. Leveraging existing Hennepin County Library and Human Services supports that could be co-located on campus to support students with basic needs, education and other opportunities.

e. Strengthen partnerships with K-12 partners to improve student preparation for college, and faculty preparation for students.

6. College Persistence Policy Agenda
   a. Policy Coordination (part of overall coordination, Alliance)
   b. Work with Alliance partners to identify policies issues that block cities, schools, colleges and county to effectively serve students
   c. Collaboratively educate our elected officials on each issue
   d. Partner with other entities support our shared policy platform for college persistence

Blueprint Architects

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